

Question for Secretary Kathleen Sebelius from Representative Xavier Becerra

As you know, in July 2010, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and Office of the National Coordinator for HIT (ONC) promulgated regulations implementing the first of three stages of the Medicare/Medicaid Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Program, or “meaningful use,” which was established by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The CMS and ONC rulemakings to implement the second stage of the program will begin later this year with the second stage starting in 2013. The “meaningful use” incentives will turn into Medicare physician payment reductions for noncompliance by eligible professionals beginning in 2015 and beyond.

Many physician specialists are concerned with the implementation of EHR Incentive Program because some of the requirements seem to be more appropriate to determine meaningful use of EHR by primary care physicians than physician specialties such as radiology, pathology and anesthesiology who use different technologies and have different data needs. In the regulations for the second stage, is HHS planning to develop a “meaningful use” standard that takes into consideration the unique practice characteristics of radiologists and other eligible specialists?